

<u>COMMITTEE</u>	<u>Item</u>
Council 19 th December 2019	Public

ANNUAL REPORT 2017-2018

PLACE OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 The annual statement of the Place Overview Committee provides a brief review of the committee's work during the previous year, as well as an overview of its work for the year ahead.

2.0 Place Overview Committee

- 2.1 During 2018 and 2019 the Place Overview Committee has looked at topics from across its remit. The following have been the main areas of focus:

- **Balancing housing and economic growth**

The committee looked several times at housing policy, in particular its role in supporting economic growth. As well as housing growth in urban areas, it also looked at how the council's planning policy maintained or enhanced the vitality of those communities. This work led to setting up a task and finish group that scrutinised and supported the council's proposals to set up its own housing development corporation.

- **North West Relief Road**

The committee scrutinised proposals for the proposed North West Relief Road. As well as looking at the business case for the road, it heard from people and members who were opposed to the proposed road. Although the committee gave its support to the proposals, it agreed that it would track the road's development.

- **Planning policy**

Throughout the year, the committee heard representations from community groups about their concerns with the ongoing development of the council's Local Development Framework. Committee members expressed concerns about how the council had calculated the services available in small settlements, but accepted that any decision on the soundness of the framework was a matter for the Planning Inspectorate.

- **Apprenticeships and skills training**

Throughout the year the committee scrutinised skills training in Shropshire. It received assurances from the council that it was effectively using its own Apprenticeship Levy. It also heard from Shrewsbury Colleges Group about

how it worked with businesses to ensure that it provided training that was relevant to business needs.

- **Town centre development**

The committee scrutinised the council's plan for Shrewsbury town, and was broadly supportive of proposals. It sought and received assurances that officers were supporting other market towns to draft plans for their town centres.

- **Shrewsbury shopping centres**

Members expressed concern at the size of the investment that the council had made in Shrewsbury's three shopping centres. Officers told the committee that the centres continued to provide a reasonable return on its investments. They also explained that the investment gave the council long-term control over the future of Shrewsbury town centre.

- **Supporting small and medium enterprises**

The committee sought to understand how the local authority supported small and medium enterprises. The appointment of a new officer to oversee this work had resulted in a new focus in this area. Officers explained that they would continue to work individually with key businesses, while providing more general support for other enterprises looking to set up or move to Shropshire.

- **Accessible green space**

As part of its work to look at how the council supports communities, it looked at how the council provides accessible green space to residents. Officers explained it was often rural communities with the poorest access to open space, even when there are useable open space nearby. Members were satisfied that the council used its budget effectively in improving accessibility.

- **Climate change**

The committee heard from officers about plans to respond to the Council-declared climate emergency. It agreed to create a task and finish group to look in depth at the council's proposed strategy, which will report to the People Overview Committee shortly.

- **Street works and street furniture**

Over the course of the year the committee considered a number of street works issues, including:

- A boards and banners
- Christmas decorations
- Housing development signs
- Pavement permits

It agreed to consider all of these issues in a single task and finish group meeting, which will report back to the Place Overview Committee in 2020.

- **Highways partners' annual reports**

The committee receives annual reports from the council's highways partners, WSP and Kier. Members raised numerous concerns about the existing contract with Kier. However officers were able to provide reassurance that service delivery and budget control were operating as planned.

3.0 2019-2020 onwards

3.1 Significant topics emerging for the coming year include:

- WSP annual report
- Street works task and finish group
- Shrewsbury town centre strategy
- North West Relief Road
- Communicating road works and street works
- Night-time economy
- Local housing company
- Biodiversity
- Climate change

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)
None
Human Rights Act Appraisal The recommendations contained in this report are compatible with the provisions of the Human Rights act 1998
Environmental Appraisal There are no environmental issues relating to this report.
Risk Management Appraisal There are no risks associated with this report.
Community / Consultations Appraisal Consultation is a component of Scrutiny work to collect information to support the development of conclusions and recommendations.

Cabinet Members
Cllr Gwilym Butler Cllr Steve Davenport Cllr Robert Macey
Local Member/s
All
Appendices
None